



Morning Alert - Thursday, March 15, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK, TBS, and TV Asahi gave top play to reports that the ruling parties may agree to summon former Financial Bureau chief Sagawa to the Diet over the Finance Ministry's falsification of documents related to the sale of state-owned land to Moritomo Gakuen. Fuji TV also led with updates on the Moritomo Gakuen scandal. NTV led with a report that a man was arrested after stabbing several officials of Kanazawa City Hall in Ishikawa Prefecture on Wednesday.

All national dailies other than Nikkei led with reports on the document falsification scandal involving the Finance Ministry. Nikkei led with a report on survey results showing that 70% of leading firms in Japan are planning to increase their employees' base salaries this year.

INTERNATIONAL

Foreign Minister Kono to visit U.S. this week

Nikkei wrote that despite President Trump's dismissal on Tuesday of Secretary of State Tillerson, Foreign Minister Kono will visit the United States later this week as scheduled to conduct policy coordination toward North Korea with the U.S. government ahead of a planned U.S.-Japan summit in early April and an envisaged summit between the U.S. and DPRK leaders by May. The paper wrote that Kono is hoping to confirm with Secretary of Defense Mattis and other senior USG officials the policy of maintaining the maximum pressure campaign against the DPRK. Mainichi ran a similar report.

Japan apparently concerned that abduction issue could be left unaddressed

Mainichi claimed that the GOJ is concerned that the abduction issue could be left unaddressed amid North Korea's readiness to hold summits with the United States and South Korea. The paper

speculated that the GOJ is planning to strengthen coordination with the United States and South Korea ahead of their planned meetings with the North Korean leader.

Abductees' families pin hopes on envisaged U.S.-DPRK summit

Asahi wrote that Shigeo Iizuka, the head of a group representing the families of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea, reportedly said at an LDP meeting on the abductions that the envisaged summit between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will be “the chance of lifetime.”

Japan, South Korea to hold working-level security dialogue

Nikkei and Sankei wrote that MOFA announced on Wednesday that working-level officials from the foreign ministries and the defense ministries of Japan and South Korea will hold a security dialogue in Tokyo on Thursday. This will be the first time for the two governments to hold such a meeting since April 2015. The papers wrote that two nations will discuss North Korea and bilateral security cooperation at the meeting, which MOFA Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director-General Kanasugi and his ROK counterpart are expected to attend.

Prime Minister Abe holds talks with Sri Lanka president

All national dailies reported on a meeting held between Prime Minister Abe and visiting Sri Lankan President Sirisena at the Kantei on Wednesday. Asahi, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that the two leaders agreed to promote bilateral cooperation on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region and infrastructure development in Sri Lanka. Mainichi wrote that Abe and Sirisena confirmed cooperation in promoting the “free and open Indo-Pacific” strategy. Yomiuri wrote that the two leaders agreed to expand economic cooperation between their nations, adding that the premier invited executives of Japanese small- and mid-sized enterprises planning to launch businesses in Sri Lanka to a dinner honoring President Sirisena on Wednesday. Sankei added that Abe called on Sri Lanka, which has diplomatic relations with North Korea, to cooperate in putting pressure on Pyongyang in order to resolve the nuclear, missile, and abduction issues. The two governments exchanged documents on Japan’s 10.6 billion yen loans for projects to improve Sri Lanka’s health and medical services.
